

Criterion #2: Substantial Community Identity

State's Criteria: The newly unified school district must be "organized on the basis of a substantial community identity", ref. Education Code Section 35753(a)(2). Section 18573(a)(2), Title 5, California Code of Regulations, states: "To determine whether the new district is organized on the basis of substantial community identity, the following criteria should be considered:

- A. Isolation.
- B. Geography.
- C. Distance between social centers.
- D. Distance between school centers.
- E. Topography.
- F. Weather.
- G. Community, school, and social ties and other circumstances peculiar to the area.

Analysis: The Southeast Area is not isolated since it is located in a densely populated urban area. The area is geographically compact (approximately 7 square miles), shares a common topography (i.e. there are no distinct geological features) and shares the same weather. Because of the area's geographical compactness, the distances between social and school centers are of short duration. Community identity is clearly shown by each of the above Criteria A - F.

Probably the most important factor that identifies the community identity within the Southeast Area is Criterion G: community, school, and social ties and other circumstances peculiar to the area. Specifically, the study area, which evaluates the feasibility of a Southeast Los Angeles Unified School District, was developed by the membership in a long-standing civic committee on education, currently called the Southeast Cities for Educational Empowerment (SECEDE), and detailed in SB 1380 (Chapter 335/2000). The committee's membership of primarily city elected officials and representatives from adjacent incorporated areas, working closely with Senator Escutia's and Assemblyman Firebaugh's staff, illustrates the close community ties and working relationships between the cities -- ties separate from the City of Los Angeles. The study area includes the cities of Bell, South Gate, Cudahy, Maywood, Huntington Park, and Vernon, and the unincorporated areas of Florence/Graham and Walnut Park. A map of the area can be found in Appendix A.

In addition, the study area has generally the same boundaries as Assembly District #50 boundaries that lie within LAUSD. Congressional and State Senate districts also neatly overlay the area. And, LAUSD views the area as separate

District J, although three neighboring District I schools are included in the study area.

In discussions with local civic leaders and Senator Martha Escutia's staff, historically the cities of Cudahy, Bell and Maywood have had a close relationship and are sometimes referred to as the "Tri-Cities." Although the cities of South Gate, Maywood, Huntington Park and Vernon and the unincorporated areas of Florence/Graham and Walnut Park are not included within the historical reference to the "Tri-Cities", all those interviewed (e.g. SECEDE members, Senator Escutia's staff, and community members attending the public meetings) agreed that the entire area worked cooperatively on many projects, including this study. In the minds of the local representatives, the study boundaries clearly reflect community boundaries, separate from the rest of LAUSD. In addition, a philanthropic organization, the "Old Timers Foundation", has membership and service projects throughout the entire area.

The area is also well defined geographically. It is approximately 7 square miles, and it is densely populated with little open space. It is bordered on the east by the 710 freeway, south by Martin Luther King Blvd., west by Central Ave., and north by Washington Blvd. – all major transportation routes. The Los Angeles River also borders the north and east areas of the study area. Geographically the area is nearly rectangular in shape.

Demographically, the entire region varies little. The area is ethnically 98% Hispanic, the median income in the area was at \$23,044 in 1990 (2000 Census data on income was not available as of the date of this report) and the average poverty rate is 20% based on 2000 CBEDS reported data.

There is a mixture of single family and multiple family housing units, many post-war vintage 1940-50's. The commercial areas are centered to conveniently serve the local neighborhoods. Schools, religious centers, and community parks all add to the sense of community.

The City of Vernon is the primary industrial area while the balance of the study area is residential and commercial. Overall, the area shares the same economic type base. Over the years, this economic base has changed, and according to community members, the community has adapted to the changes. For example, the area has moved from an agricultural based economy to one that is industrial and service-oriented. Locals viewed that the economic livelihood of the area was tied together as part of the community.

Withdrawal of the Southeast Area should also not affect the community identity of LAUSD. Already the district acknowledges the uniqueness of the area by establishing it as District J. And, LAUSD is comprised of many communities, such as: Carson; East, West, and Central Los Angeles; the San Fernando Valley and so forth.

Consultant's Conclusion: Based on the data provided and interviews conducted, NNW concludes that it appears the unification study area in Southeast Los Angeles is based on substantial community identity.